

How to Prepare an Annotated Bibliography

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WHAT IS AN ANNOTATED BIBLIOGRAPHY?

An annotated bibliography is a list of citations for books, articles, and documents.

Each citation is followed by a brief (usually about 150 words) descriptive and evaluative paragraph, the annotation.

The purpose of the annotation is to inform the reader of the relevance, accuracy, and quality of the sources cited.

THE PROCESS

- Creating an annotated bibliography calls for the application of a variety of intellectual skills: concise exposition, succinct analysis, and informed library research.
- First, locate and record citations to books, periodicals, and documents that may contain useful information and ideas on your topic.
- Briefly examine and review the actual items. Then choose those works that provide a variety of perspectives on your topic.

The Process Continued

Cite the book, article, or document using the appropriate style.

Write a concise annotation that summarizes the central theme and scope of the book or article. Include one or more sentences that

- (a) evaluate the authority or background of the author,
- (b) explain how this work illuminates your bibliography topic.

CRITICALLY APPRAISING THE BOOK, ARTICLE, OR DOCUMENT

For guidance in critically appraising and analyzing the sources for your bibliography, think about the following questions:

Questions to Consider ???

- What are the author's credentials--institutional affiliation?
- Have you seen the author's name cited in other sources or bibliographies? (respected authors are cited frequently by other scholars)
- When was the source published?
- Is the source current or out-of-date for your topic?
- If the source is published by a university press, it is likely to be scholarly
- Is this a *popular* magazine or *scholarly* journal?
- Is the publication aimed at a specialized or a general audience?

More Questions.....

- Is there a bibliography?
- Is the information covered fact, opinion, or propaganda?
- Does the information appear to be valid and well-researched, or is it questionable and unsupported by evidence?
- Are the ideas and arguments advanced more or less in line with other works you have read on the same topic?
- Does the source *extensively* or *marginally* cover your topic?
- Is the material *primary* or *secondary* in nature?
- Locate critical reviews in a reviewing source, such as *Book Review Index*, *Book Review Digest*, OR *Periodical Abstracts*

MLA or APA???

MLA Citation Style and APA Citation Style handbooks are available at the Oviatt Library Reference desk. Style manuals for some other formats are also kept in the reference collections. Check with your instructor to find out which style is preferred for your class. Online citation guides for both Modern Language Association (MLA) and American Psychological Association (APA) are available on the Library's web pages under the "How to Do Library Research Section."

**This example uses the MLA format for
the journal citation:**

**Flynn, Richard. “The Kindergarten of New Consciousness
Gwendolyn Brooks and the Social Construction of
Childhood ” *African American Review* 34, no. 3 (2000 Fall):
483-99**

Identify the title of the article?

Identify the title of the journal where the article appeared?

Same Annotation

Five or six sentences describing the article:

Information about the author of the article;

The point of view of the author/scholar;

School of thought;

What kind of article is it...literary criticism, historical piece, biographical, etc...

What an annotation should include:

- Complete bibliographic information.
- Some or all of the following:
 - Information to explain the authority and/or qualifications of the author. For example: Dr. William Smith, a history professor at XYZ University, based his book on twenty years of research.
 - Scope and main purpose of the work.
 - Any biases that you detect.
 - Intended audience and level of reading difficulty.
 - The relationship, if any, to other works in the area of study.
 - A summary comment, e.g., "A popular account directed at educated adults."
- The annotation should be about 100 to 200 words.

Book Example

- Goulart, R. (1989). *The Great Comic Book Artists, Volume 2*. New York: St Martin's Press.

The alphabetically arranged entries include one page each for the artist biography and black-and-white reprinted art. The subjective choices for inclusion reflect a pronounced American, corporate bias. This slant and the blurry comic-book reproductions render the title a cut below Goulart's usual high standards.

Another Example...

Larkin, C. (Ed.). (1992). *The Guinness Encyclopedia of Popular Music*. London: Guinness.

Very comprehensive reference book of 3,296 pages (more than 10,000 entries) encompassing all styles of popular music, including jazz. Primarily biographical, but does contain record label histories. Entries from 150 to 3,000 words, though some important artists have longer entries. Most artists from UK and US, though additionally many reggae, Latin, and Afro-pop artists from outside these countries. Most entries include discography.

Other examples

The Library has many annotated bibliographies to browse.

Try a search on “annotated bibliography” and you will see many choices.

Catalog: <http://suncat.csun.edu>